

Beyond the News

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Chalak Obama

By Peter Eng

Bleeding Heart Dove from Luzon, Philippines



This article is written in response to several requests to comment on Obama's recent assertion that Israel needs to withdraw to its pre-1967 borders.

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President Obama visited Britain on May 23, 2011 and Scotland Yard gave him the code name "Chalak." It is Hindi for "smart Alec," "wise guy" or "someone too clever for his own good." It is a mildly derisive term. This is supposedly a random computer generated word.

Perhaps it was in response to [his speech on the Middle East](#) (May 19), for which Prime Minister Netanyahu took him to the woodshed. Who knows how these randomly generated names can be so appropriate? Surely we must not think that the Brits who

love Obama would be so disrespectful. Ah, it must be just a strange coincidence.

The big issue in question concerning Obama's speech about Israel is his assertion that Israel must withdraw to its pre-1967 borders. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu dismisses this as completely untenable. The American Congress support Netanyahu against their President with almost thirty standing ovations during Netanyahu's speech to Congress. In the meantime, Obama and his team back-peddles as they try to explain themselves. This is a not a high moment for Obama's image at home and abroad.

My political views are irrelevant and probably not too profound. So I will limit my discourse to how biblical teachings and Christian concerns may have bearing on the issues at hand.

Israel Today

I have previously written on the Palestinian situation and my view has not changed. I believe that God has assigned a homeland for the descendants of Abraham — the Jews. Historically, the border has shifted for various reasons. At Israel's height, her territory included Jordan, the Sinai and parts of modern day Syria. At her weakest, Israel comprised scattered communities in the mountainous region of the land.

Christians are conjoined twins with Israel because our heritage is the Old Testament

and we are the offshoot of Israel. So the Christian quest for meaning concerning Israel is entirely appropriate.

When Jesus came to earth, he ministered almost exclusively to the people of Israel. In the words of John the Apostle, "He came to his own and his own people did not receive him" ([Jn 1:11](#)). Instead, some of the religious leaders, primarily the Sadducees, instigated the Romans to crucify Jesus. They intended this as an evil act, but God worked it out for good ([Gen 50:20](#)). Jesus went to the cross willingly as a sacrifice for our sin ([Jn 10:18](#)), even though it seemed for a moment that wicked men had their way.

The grave could not hold Jesus. On the third day, Jesus rose from the dead, and this led to the birth of the church.

The first disciples regarded themselves as true Israel. Their mission was transformed by the death and resurrection of Jesus. They abandoned a goal that was limited to Israel's political deliverance; and instead, took on the goal of making disciples of all nations ([Mt 28:19-20](#)). They realized they had limited their vision to the land of Israel when God was calling them to reach the world. They realized that they wanted salvation from the Romans when God wanted to give all humankind salvation from sin and death. They realized their agenda was too narrow, their aims too low, and their goals too small.

Some Jewish Christians could not break out of that limited thinking, and they wanted all believers to be circumcised so they could belong to true Israel. They wanted every Christian to become a Jew. But the work of God was clear. He was bringing salvation to Gentiles without circumcision ([Acts 10:15:6-11](#)). God did not require Gentiles to become Jews to receive the Holy Spirit, so who were they to require it? The motion to require circumcision failed; and the motion

to receive Gentiles into true Israel without circumcision became the norm.

So where should Israel stand in the corporate consciousness of Christians? For some, Israel is relevant because the events surrounding Israel portends the Second Coming of Christ. I think there is limited truth in this, but that is another conversation. What is important is our relationship to Israel regardless of our view of how the Second Coming of Christ will happen.

For this, we turn to the Apostle to the Gentiles — Paul. At some point, it became important for Paul to explain how Gentile Christians (the majority of true Israel) should relate to national Israel. This relationship is laid out for the Christians in Rome, and for us, in [Romans 9-11](#).

Paul is grieved that his fellow Jews rejected Jesus ([Rom 9:1-5](#)), "for not all who are descended from Israel belong to [true] Israel, and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring" ([Rom 9:7](#)). He then explained to his Jewish readers God's righteousness in calling the Gentiles to be true Israel, reminding them from a prophecy in the OT, "Those who are not my people I will call 'my people,' and she who was not beloved I will call 'beloved.' And in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' they will be called 'sons of the living God.'" ([Rom 9:25-26](#)).

Jesus was a stumbling stone to many Jews. They were offended that Jesus was not the type of Savior they were expecting. They had to change the view of the Messiah. "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame." ([Rom 9:33](#)).

(Christians are so used to the idea we should not be stumbling blocks that we forget Jesus was a stumbling block.)

Paul grieves that the passion Jews have for God is misdirected ([Rom 10:1ff](#)); and even though they are not excluded from God's grace, they have not appropriated it. "I ask, then, has God rejected his people [Jews]? By no means!" ([Rom 11:1](#)).

"I want you to understand this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And in this way all Israel will be saved ..." ([Rom 11:25-26](#)). "As regards the gospel, they are enemies of God for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable." ([Rom 11:28-29](#)).

The Christian connection to Israel is strong. Paul points out, "Now, if their (Jewish) trespass means riches to the world, and if their failure means riches for Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!" ([Rom 11:11-12](#)).

The blessings we received on account of Israel's rejection will explode upon Israel's repentance!

We long for Jewish repentance and acceptance of Jesus as Messiah. We wish them well. We grieve to see them deprive themselves of blessings we have received through them. We continue to reach the Jews so that they will repent and turn to Jesus. God has given irrevocable promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. For a time, national Israel is not true Israel. But there will come a time when national Israel will become true Israel.

The Tension Today

When Israel declared nationhood in 1948, the Palestinians together with other Arab/Muslim nations tried to commit genocide against them. They were very clear they wanted to continue Hitler's goal and they would love to kill all Jews. The Jews fought for their survival and secured

the Jewish state. To this day, Palestinian children are fed a diet of Jewish extermination. It is the charter of Hamas to wipe Israel off the face of the earth.

Christians have a religious and moral duty to support the right of Jews to live securely. We do not have to agree with all Israel does. Israel is often anti-Christian and oppressive towards Palestinians.

Our duty towards Israel has to be nuanced. It should be support for their right to live in peace, but it should not be unqualified. There is much unrighteousness in national Israel (as there is in any country). Unqualified support for Israel is foolish and unrighteous. If Jesus had given unqualified support, he would have become a Savior for national Israel.

Christians need to start with supporting the security of national Israel. But we cannot stop there.

We need to reintroduce the Messiah to them.

Israel Pre-1967 Borders

The first problem with Israel's national security is that Palestinian people as a whole do not accept the existence of Israel. Palestinians voted in Hamas, a terrorist organization with the destruction of Israel as its charter. In short, Palestinians, especially those in the Gaza Strip, made a collective decision: destroy Israel.

President Bush identified Hamas as a terrorist organization, and President Obama has not disputed that classification. Until Palestinians collectively renounce their aim of genocide, they have no legitimacy in any political process. Even though there is no political legitimacy it is necessary to engage them because it is a practical necessity. It is reasonable for Israel to demand recognition from the Palestinians. Whether it should be part of the deal or as a pre-

condition may be debated. Imagine the reverse. Imagine Israel saying they are committed to killing all Palestinians, but they want Palestinians to negotiate with them.

Obama seems to miss the boat when he thinks that Israel's land concession to Palestinians is key to the resolution of the problem. At this point in time, it does not seem viable because the pre-1967 border does not seem defensible. This is contrary to Israel's need for basic security against people who have a long record of belligerence. Palestinian hate speech and diet of genocide against all Jews is difficult to undo. It is a rhetoric driven by an ideology that is beyond what two parties can accomplish on the negotiating table. Palestinians have used Islam as their reason for genocide against Jews. Non-Muslims do not have legitimacy in Muslim eyes to tell them otherwise. Acceptance of Israel must come from Muslims; and I don't see that happening.

A Christian Solution

There is a Christian solution. It will sound impossible. It would be as impracticable as when Jesus told a small band of followers to make disciples of all nations.

Spiritual reality cannot be evaluated on the basis of probability based on current circumstances. It is based on what God expects of us. As he commands, he fulfills.

The solution is found in the Christian mission to make disciples of all nations. This includes Palestinians and Jews.

There are already Christian Palestinians and Messianic Jews. As disciples of Jesus, they espouse principles that clear the way for peace.

America is doing much for Israel's security. America is trying to facilitate peace between two warring parties. That is possible only

when both parties want peace. The Palestinians have not shown that willingness. The Christian solution to the problem in the Middle East is to bring the good news of Jesus to the belligerents.

Both Palestinians and Jews oppose the freedom to convert to Christianity. America needs to strengthen Palestinian Christians and Messianic Jews and to support Palestinian and Jewish freedom to convert. Freedom to convert can be achieved politically.

Palestinian prohibition to convert does not require elaboration. But Jewish prohibition is less known. Israel as a nation has to appease Orthodox Jews but do not have to appease any American demand to allow conversions because America has made no such demand. Netanyahu incorrectly characterized freedom of religion in Israel. Christians are severely restricted in Israel. Don't let his claims fool you!

When the region was under Muslim control, historic Christians were tolerated by Muslims. To be sure, Christians were not allowed to convert, but they were allowed to exist. Israel's position towards Christians is similar. Christians are tolerated. On account of Israel's dependence on America and on Christian support, Israel tolerates us. But it is important that Messianic Jews make gains in freedom to convert.

Conclusion

President Bush had thought that democratic elections would help Palestinians move towards peace. In the short term, the elections have only proved that Palestinians support the Hamas charter of Jewish genocide. The elections are not a total loss in that the Palestinian people have their wish. And perhaps they will eventually see the need to modify their wish. But for now, they are learning that Hamas will get them nowhere. In the next Palestinian election, we will see if they will come to their senses.

The rhetoric that resonates with Palestinians is anti-Jew. Until that appetite changes, I don't see free election as a solution.

President Obama's call for Israel to withdraw to the pre-1967 border while affirming Israel's need for security is confusing at best. He seems to be quite alone in thinking that the pre-1967 border is defensible. He also seems to think that land concessions to Palestinians will change Palestinian minds about their commitment to commit genocide. I think Obama's solution is even less tenable and has less merit than Bush's solution. The only logical connection they can make is that Hamas is able to deliver.

This conflict has lasted more than sixty years, and political solutions have failed. The biggest problem lies with the Palestinians. Their goal is not peace but the death of all Jews. How can America broker peace when the Palestinians want war?

Anwar Sadat, the President of Egypt who was assassinated because he made peace with Israel, said, "Russians can give you arms but only the United States can give you a solution." This is a positive view of America from the Middle East, but he gives America too much credit. America does not have a solution: not Carter, not Bush, not Bush, and not Obama.

Golda Meir, Israel first female Prime Minister, said, "If we are to achieve peace, we must first love our children more than we hate our enemies." She correctly identifies the problem: hate.

How can America remove Palestinian hatred and desire to kill all Jews? How can America stop Jews from abusing Palestinians on a day-to-day basis?

We need a change of the heart. Jesus is the answer.

If the saving work of Jesus has been transforming both Jews and Palestinians for the last sixty years, we will be much closer to finding peace between Jews and Palestinians. Imagine the teachings of Jesus among both Jews and Palestinians. Christian values will replace Israel's meanness towards Palestinians and Palestinian blood thirst against Israel. Peace becomes possible.

No, peace becomes inevitable.

Note: The ESV is used unless indicated otherwise.

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Please also read:

- [Palestinian Statehood](#)
- [Peace for Jews and Palestinians](#)



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